

**E-GOV TRAVEL SERVICE (ETS) PROCEDURES FOR
TEMPORARY DUTY (TDY) TRAVEL**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To provide procedures for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ETS for TDY travel.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This handbook describes Departmentwide guidelines for implementing VA's ETS for TDY travel.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Finance, Financial Services Center, Austin, TX.
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VA Directive 0636, E-Gov Travel Service Policy for TDY Travel; VA Directive 4003, Travel Reimbursement; and OF Bulletin 05GA2.09, Compensatory Time (CT) for Travel.
- 5. RESCISSION:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
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E-GOV TRAVEL SERVICE (ETS) PROCEDURES FOR TEMPORARY DUTY (TDY) TRAVEL

- 1. PURPOSE.** This handbook prescribes procedures for use of VA's ETS for TDY travel, in accordance with the policy published in VA Directive 0636.
- 2. SCOPE.** VA's ETS is a Departmentwide system. The procedures apply to all official Government travel authorized by VA.
- 3. TYPES OF TRAVEL.** The ETS supports the planning, processing, online booking of reservations, and reimbursement of multiple types of travel, including:
 - a. Temporary Duty (TDY)
 - (1) Trip-by-trip
 - (2) Limited Open Travel Authorization
 - (3) Unlimited Open Travel Authorization
 - b. Invitational Travel
- 4. SYSTEM SUPPORT**
 - a. The ETS provider will provide both technical and operational support to customers 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.
 - b. VA Facility Support
 - (1) The facility-designated system administrator for the ETS communicates technical problems to the service provider and controls the technical aspects of providing access to the system.
 - (2) The facility-designated primary and secondary e-Travel coordinators provide assistance to users at their respective facilities. This includes:
 - (a) Onsite training for new personnel or refresher training for existing personnel.
 - (b) Response to routine questions about the system process flow and/or data entry problems (e.g., which screen to fill out first, what data element to enter in a particular field, what information to provide during initial set up). The facility coordinator, or alternate, will not need to respond to system questions such as forgotten passwords or technical questions about the software.

5. SYSTEM ACCESS. Management officials at the facility level will determine who is provided access to the system.

a. The ETS is a Web-based product. Access to the system's homepage requires Internet access. The homepage address is:
<http://www.FedTraveler.com>.

b. Based on information from management, the facility's system administrator provides the appropriate level of access to authorized users, alternate preparers, or approving officials.

c. The service provider will provide a user identification (Member ID) and password to each authorized user after they are granted access.

6. SYSTEM AVAILABILITY

a. This system will be available for use through the Internet 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and 365 days per year. The system may be accessed through VA computer systems and remotely using personal or VA provided systems (laptop, blackberry, Personal Digital Assistant).

b. The traveler can contact representatives at the vendor-provided helpdesk from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. (eastern) at 1-800-365-9513. A traveler should attempt to resolve their problem by contacting the facility travel coordinator or system administrator before contacting the vendor helpdesk. All itineraries include a toll-free telephone number the traveler may call 24 hours per day, 7 days per week while in travel status.

c. Should the ETS system become unavailable for any reason, employees may complete travel arrangements manually by contacting the appropriate Travel Management Center (TMC) to make reservations. The TMC will complete the travel arrangements and will enter the necessary information into a queue for later processing in the ETS to generate a travel plan once the system becomes available. Travelers will receive a notification from the ETS to review and complete the Travel Plan.

7. TRAVELER RESPONSIBILITIES. Travelers are responsible for initiating and monitoring the travel planning and expense report preparation process.

a. Creating Travel Plans. The traveler or alternate preparer will create a travel plan. The traveler or alternate preparer will follow the process defined by the service provider's software and provide all required information to create the travel plan. The traveler or alternate preparer will submit the travel plan for approval.

(1) Creation of a plan does not entitle the employee to travel. All travel plans must be approved by an approving official and budget official prior to travel.

(2) The Online Booking Engine (OBE) allows travelers to make reservations online in the privacy of their home or office. Travelers will select flights based on trip definition and federal regulations which are appropriate for the trip they are taking. Hotel and/or car reservations will be made using the OBE at the time of Travel Plan entry. If flight reservations are not required, hotel and/or car reservations can still be made through the use of the OBE.

(3) Checking the status of a travel plan. The system tracks the flow of the plan through the approval process. Travelers and alternate preparers need to access the system during the approval process to obtain the status of the travel plan. The traveler or alternate preparer is required to take different actions depending on the status of a request. For example, if a travel plan is determined to be incomplete, the traveler must provide the additional information needed, either through direct input or by providing the information to an alternate preparer for entry into the system. The status of a travel request can change at any time depending on management priorities, funding, or emergency situations.

(4) When circumstances arise and a traveler must travel under verbal authority, the traveler is responsible for creating a travel plan in the system as soon as possible.

b. Obtaining airline, hotel and car rental itinerary. This information will be e-mailed to the traveler or alternate preparer. The itinerary may also be faxed if the number is provided.

c. Entering an expense report. Upon completion of the travel, the traveler will use the ETS to complete an expense report. Travelers must input all required information in order to receive reimbursement.

(1) Travelers are required to submit an expense report in accordance with policy. While an alternate preparer may prepare the expense report, it is the traveler's responsibility to verify its accuracy. Once verified, the traveler must submit the completed travel expense report to the approving and budget officials for processing within 5 business days following completion of official travel.

(2) Expenses claimed for reimbursement must be associated with official Government travel.

(3) Checking the expense report status. The ETS tracks the progress of an expense report through the approval process. The traveler needs to access the ETS to determine the status of their reimbursement.

(4) The traveler may be required to take different actions depending on the status of the report.

(5) Requesting split disbursement. Travelers will split the reimbursement amount with the Government travel card-issuing bank for all charges due to the issuing bank. The traveler or alternate preparer will enter -- in the "Split to Card" field -- the amounts charged on the government-issued travel charge card for payment directly to the bank through the ETS. Residual balances will be paid to the traveler.

8. APPROVING OFFICIAL'S RESPONSIBILITY. The approving official reviews travel plans and expense reports and determines if they are necessary and reasonable. The approving official can return travel plans or expense reports to the traveler/alternate preparer for cancellation or modification. It is the approving official's responsibility to ensure that an employee who owes money to the government-issued travel charge card bank has selected split disbursement.

9. BUDGET OFFICIAL'S RESPONSIBILITY. The budget official verifies the availability of funds for the proposed travel plan and for the expense report. The budget official will return the travel plan to the traveler or alternate preparer if there are funding issues.

10. MODIFYING APPROVED TRAVEL PLANS. Travel arrangements often need to be modified after they have been prepared or while the traveler is in travel status. Changes requiring approval (those significantly changing the scope of the trip) should be authorized by the approving official before they are made. The traveler may not make modifications to an approved travel plan in order to take a non-contract flight or a personally preferred carrier. Travelers can make changes to their travel plans through the following methods.

a. If the traveler has access to the Internet, they should make changes through the ETS.

b. All modifications should be documented as part of an amended travel plan and reflected in the expense report.

11. REIMBURSEMENT

a. The traveler will be reimbursed per the policy established by the Federal Travel Regulation, Public Law 105-264, and VA Directive 4003, Travel Reimbursement.

b. ETS will allow split disbursements, enabling the traveler to allow VA to directly reimburse the travel card bank.

12. PERSONAL TRAVEL. Use of VA's ETS for personal use is prohibited.

13. TERMINATION OF ACCESS. Access to the system will be terminated for any of the following reasons: the employee leaves VA, the approving official determines the employee no longer requires access, and/or the employee uses ETS for unauthorized purposes. Upon termination of access for any reason, the approving official shall contact the system administrator to ensure system access is terminated.

14. SYSTEM SECURITY. ETS conforms to all VA system security requirements.

15. PRIVACY ACT NOTICE. The following information is provided to comply with the Privacy Act of 1974 (as amended). The information requested is not mandatory; however, failure to provide the information required by ETS will prevent continued use and access to the system. VA requests the information under Chapter 57 of Title 5, United States Code, for the purposes of recording travel expenses incurred by the employee and to claim other entitlement and allowances. The substantive information entered by employees into the system will be used for employees to obtain approval for travel requests and to obtain reimbursement for travel expenses. The information requested as part of the initial login to the system is required to provide Government departments and agencies with the following:

- a. Necessary information on the commercial travel and transportation payment and expense control system that will provide travelers charge cards for official travel and related expenses;

- b. Attendant operational and control support; and

- c. Management information reports for expense control purposes.

- d. Federal department and agency officers and employees who have a need for such information in the performance of their duties use this information. Information is transferred to appropriate Federal, State, or local agencies when relevant to civil, criminal, or regulatory investigations or prosecutions or pursuant to a requirement by GSA or such other agency in connection with the hiring or firing, security clearance, or such other investigations of the performance of official duty in Government service.